



Town of Acton Recreation Commission

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TOWN CLERK
ACTON

MINUTES

DATE: JANUARY 8, 2008

7:00 PM

ROOM 126, ACTON TOWN HALL

ATTENDEES	Recreation Commission members present were Mr. Ron Schlegel, Mr. Frank Calore, Ms. Karen Jarsky and Mr. Jon Benson. Also present was Ms. Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director and Ms. Cheryl Getsick, Recreation Secretary. Ms. Alison Gallagher was not present.
NOTE TAKER	Ms. Cheryl Getsick

AGENDA TOPICS

Meeting called to order at: 7:15 PM

Citizens Concerns:

DISCUSSION	<p>a) Citizen Report of Dog Attack</p> <p>Ms. Fochtman had been contacted by an Acton resident who reported an incident when she was walking her client's two dogs at Nashoba Brook. One of the client's dogs was attacked by two large dogs. A description of the two large dogs was provided. The dogs retreated and returned to their owner only when a gentleman called from the distance. The resident noticed a green Chevy Cavalier in the parking lot; but could not make out the license plate. The resident informed Ms. Fochtman as an FYI. A similar occurrence happened at Nagog Hill Road several months ago to a Town employee's dog.</p> <p>Mr. Calore noted that since this occurred on conservation land, the resident should call the police department. Similarly, during cross country practice, Mr. Calore reported a jogger was also bit and the police were called.</p> <p>b) Lights / Elm Street</p> <p>A call was received by Ms. Fochtman regarding Elm Street Field lights being left on during non-usage times in regards to who is paying this bill and is there a better way to address turning the lights on and off?</p>
CONCLUSIONS	<p>a) Dog Attack</p> <p>Ms. Fochtman recommended the resident report the incident to the police. A description of the incident was reported to the Land Steward Committee by the citizen. Mr. Schlegel said it's nice to be informed of these occurrences; however, it remains out of the Recreation Commission's jurisdiction which is why it is necessary for the police to be called.</p> <p>b) Lights / Elm Street</p> <p>Ms. Fochtman reported that Pop Warner is aware of the lights being left and is working on a procedure to ensure lights are not left on unnecessarily in the future. Pop Warner is responsible for the light bill during their usage time which is typically August through October.</p>

CONSENT AGENDA

DISCUSSION	December 4, 2007 minutes
CONCLUSIONS	December 4, 2007 minutes were accepted as written, 4-0

SALARY PARITY LETTER OF SUPPORT

DISCUSSION	Ms. Fochtman stated the Board of Selectmen and Town Management want to bring town staff salaries comparable to surrounding communities. A consultant survey was performed in 15 towns; though not necessarily towns the same in size. Temporary Town Manager Mr. Murray made a presentation to the Finance Committee of the consultant's findings and the Selectmen's recommendation to fund salary parity.
CONCLUSIONS	Chairman Ron Schlegel signed a letter in support of the Selectmen's recommendation on behalf of the Commission and it will be forwarded onto the Selectmen.

FIELD MAINTENANCE DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION	<p>Ms. Fochtman referred to a discussion in November 2007 about charging leagues a participant fee to help fund Town of Acton field maintenance. Leagues currently selectively donate funds for improvements and if a fee was implemented, the donations may be reduced. A number of leagues are generous but the Recreation department is in a situation where we are not setting the priorities for field improvements and maintenance. The Town needs to step up and take control. If a fee was implemented it would be a wash between the fee and the donations from the leagues. With a fee imposed, the Recreation Department would be in control of how and where the monies are implemented.</p> <p>Ms. Fochtman noted the Selectmen's priority for the town to move into a "green way of doing business" works well with our goal to have a more uniformed approach to turf management.</p> <p>Another issue is to improve our fields. School street is in tough shape; (i.e. lack of irrigation to sustain turf). We had UMass Turf Team come in and provide recommendations for improving turf growth which would include aeration, adding compost and overseeding.</p> <p>Mr. Schlegel commented we need to know what number of participants each league would be contributing towards field maintenance. Individuals would contribute per sport they participate in each year, not once per individual.</p>
CONCLUSIONS	<p>A recommendation from the Recreation Commission to the Board of Selectmen justifying the implementation of fees is being prepared.</p>

GREAT HILL: DOG RECOMMENDATIONS

DISCUSSION	<p>The Commission reviewed last month's summary recommendations for Great Hill: <i>December 2007 Meeting Notes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dog owners and soccer must communicate • dogs owners are willing to do more to keep access to the park • funding for dog bags and signage through license fees • dog bag donation box • more signage • more pickup bags • better education • leash policy when children are present <p>The commission will review the data collected, draft and vote on their recommendations to the Selectmen at their February, 2008 meeting.</p> <p>Ms. Fochtman reported that she queried Town Counsel about the town's liability if they designated an official dog park in Acton. Town Counsel recommended consulting with the insurance company about preventative measures. The insurance company responded in January with the following reply:</p> <p><i>"... MIIA will always defend the town. If this is an open park (no fees charged) then the Town has the Rec Use Defense if there were a claim brought against the Town. They will not defend the dog owners – if a dog bites someone – that is the owner's responsibility. If a dog takes off, it is also the owner's responsibility. The Town may want to put up a fence as protection for the dogs and for people walking by, but the Town will have to maintain the fence."</i></p> <p>Discussion about the December meeting concluded that Great Hill meets dog owners' criteria for a good dog facility. Another Town site does not provide the features that dog owners want.</p>
CONCLUSIONS	<p>A letter will be drafted regarding the Recreation Commission's decision not to recommend an official dog park be named in the Town of Acton at Great Hill or any other location. It will include recommendations for fostering better interaction between dog owners and soccer field users at Great Hill. The letter will be finalized and voted on at the upcoming February 2008 Recreation Commission meeting.</p>

RECREATION EVENTS

DISCUSSION	<p>Recreation Events - Winterfest, Feb. 2, 2008 update</p> <p>Ms. Fochtman reviewed Winterfest activities and asked the Committee to volunteer at Winterfest.</p>
CONCLUSIONS	<p>Committee members volunteered</p>

REPORTS

DISCUSSION	<p>Elm Street Update Ms. Fochtman reported a complaint from the owner of 14 Elm Street. He objected to the height of the poles which are approximately eighty (80) feet. He also said there were lights glaring directly into his house. Last week Acton Recreation had a crew from lighting supplier, Musco, take a look and had the Town's contracted engineer, Nick Ferzacca, assess the lighting adherence to the Town Lighting Bylaw luminance restriction. Musco made adjustments to the lamps in question. The engineer verified that the lighting luminance had been corrected and is producing a report for the Building Commissioner.</p> <p>Morrison Farm Update There is an RFQ for architectural firms to assess the house and barn to make them viable for public use in progress.</p> <p>CPC Recreation projects have been submitted: Playground at Elm Street, "Trail Through Time" and Conant School Trail System redesign. Mrs. Fochtman presented the Playground project to the CPC on January 3, 2008. She recently provided follow up data comparing the cost of town staff vs. outside vendors to do site preparation. Ms. Fochtman noted that she is also obtaining additional cost data on adding a water feature to the design.</p> <p>School Street Ms. Fochtman discussed potential field improvements with the Natural Resource Staff, Tom Tidman and Shawn O'Malley. The next step is researching the cost of installing baseball backstops. They are awaiting word on the status of the state lease agreement.</p> <p>Elm Street and CPSI Update. Ms. Fochtman reported she will be attending a "Certified Playground Safety Inspector" course. It is a 3-day class with an exam.</p> <p>Open Space and Recreation Plan Ms. Fochtman is in the process of reviewing what needs to be done for the Open Space and Recreational Plan and will involve the Recreation Commission as needed.</p> <p>NARA Park 2008 Summer Operations Update Ms. Fochtman is interviewing returning NARA staff and assessing improvements to make at the facility.</p>
MEETING ADJOURNED TIME:	8:45 PM